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FABLES AND SATIRES

BY

SIR RONALD ROSS, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., F.R.S.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.



Two hundred and fifty copies of these Fables, together with a few others which are not now included, were privately printed at the University Press of Liverpool in the year nineteen hundred and seven by Messrs. Young & Sons of Liverpool; and a few copies were afterwards sold for the benefit of a contribution which I was raising on behalf of the Greek Antimalaria Fund. Four additional pieces on pages 34 - 48 were written since then. The seven concluding satires are taken, with the permission of Mr. Murray, from "The Setting Sun," published by him in 1911 and written in support of the efforts which Lord Roberts was then making to persuade his countrymen to establish a larger Army. Perhaps some of the passages here included may still be applicable.

RONALD ROSS.

5th December, 1928.

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AN EXPOSTULATION WITH TRUTH.

Uttered by the Well-Meaning Poet.

Altho' you live aloft so far,
Transcendent Goddess, in your star,
Pray, try to see us as we are.

Consider—and be more forgiving—
Life is not reasoning but believing,
And we must work to get our living.

Expound with logic most exact
And rightly marshal every fact—
D'you think we thank you for your act ?

D'you think we've nothing else to do
But to distinguish false from true ?—
We're lawyers, doctors, parsons too.

But for our little fond delusions
We'd never come to our conclusions,
And then—just think of the confusions !

You pain us when you contradict,
Your presence would the less afflict
If you were not so very strict.

Dear Lady, take this sober view,
It matters little what is true—
The world is not the place for you.

I rede you therefore, go away ;
Or, if you really mean to stay,
Let's hear your views another day.

ARIEL AND THE HIPPOPOTAMUS.

Dedicated to Rural Magnates.

Fine Ariel, serf to Prospero,
 Sped on the Great Meridian
 For jetty pearls from Andaman
 To make a chaplet to declare
 The beauty of Miranda's hair.
 When at the desert African,
 Out of his master's ken, and slow,
 Lag'd on his errand, loth to go;
 For sweltering Sol, with leaden beam,
 Made stagnant all the windy stream
 And suck'd from earth a stifling steam.
 There idling still, the lazy Sprite
 Beheld below, beneath his flight,
 The Lord of Rivers, blackly bright,
 Who, planted in a marshy bed,
 On mighty rushes munching fed
 And sigh'd for more the more he sped.
 " Good-day, my lord ; I hope you're well,"
 Quoth then the jocund Ariel.
 " Why, thank'ee, Sir, sound as a bell ;
 Save I'd complain, did I but choose,
 My appetite's so poor I lose
 Half this fine fodder. What's the news ? "
 " Great Sir, the news I brought away
 Is not so good, I'm sad to say—
 Jove has the gout again to-day."
 " Why," said the Hippopotamus,
 " That ain't no call to make a fuss ;
 I've had the same and am no wuss."

“ ’Tis said that Cytherea, queen
Of beauty, weds to-day at e’en
The sooty Vulcan hump’d and mean.”
“ There,” said the Hippopotamus,
“ That party I will not discuss.
She might have me and do no wuss.”
“ Apollo, lord of lay and lyre,
Hath seated now his Heavenly Choir
Upon Parnassus’ starry spire.”
“ Foh ! ” said the Hippopotamus,
“ For that I do not care a cuss,
And they may sing until they bus’ ! ”
“ Jove, sad for Io, hath aver’d
No sound of laughter shall be heard
One year in Heav’n, nor witty word.”
“ Ah ! ” said the Hippopotamus,
“ That there don’t suit the likes of us.
I vow I won’t be muzzled thus.”
“ Farewell, Sir,” quoth the lissom Sprite ;
“ Behoves me tear me from your sight.
I must about the world ere night.”
“ Farewell, young friend,” responded he ;
“ The work I have to do you see.
But if you hear the Thund’rer sigh
For counsel, Mars for an ally,
Dian for love, I think that I—
I pray you say a word for me.”

THE FROG, THE FAIRY, AND THE MOON.

Dedicated to Lovers.

The Frog that loved the Changing Star
Was worship'd by a Fairy,
Who made for him a waistcoat trim
Of silk and satin, soft and airy,
Button'd with eyes of fireflies
In manner military.
And more to move his languid love
A crimson cap she made him,
According to many, plumed with antennæ
Of moths that rob the flowers' honey ;
And with her kisses, lovers' money,
For that she gave she paid him.
She fed him, too, till he was blue,
With endearing terms on caddis worms ;
And caught for him the wriggling germs
Of midges ; and with tender pats
She wiled and woo'd him while he chew'd 'em ;
Till he said, " Bother ! I love another.
I love the Star I see afar,
That changeth oft her fires so soft
From blue to red and red to blue ;
And that is why I love not you.
Therefore I pray you take away
Your tedious arm, which does me harm
Because it makes me feel too warm.
But give to me my new guitar
That I may sing to yonder Star."
With that he gaped and guggled so
The Fairy into fits did go ;
And he bounded near and bounded far,
Strumming the strings of his guitar,

And tried to reach the Changing Star.
And all the while with his splay feet
Kept time unto the music meet.
With hat and waistcoat on he sprang,
And as he bounded still he sang.
And this the Saga says is why
The Frog he always jumps so high ;
For, though the Star is very far,
To reach it he must ever try,
Until it's time for him to die.
As for the foolish Fay, 'tis wist,
She wept herself into a mist,
Which wanders where the Clouds are strewn
About the deathbed of the Moon,
When with wan lips, in sudden swoon
(Because her unkind lord, the Sun,
Will ever from her loveless run),
She cries amid her Starry Maids :
“ Ah me, alas, my beauty fades ! ”—
And so sinks down into the Shades.

THE TOAD AND THE FAYS.

Dedicated to Philosophers.

There sat a Toad upon a lawn
Lost in a dream of fancy ;
His right foot in a Rose was set,
His left upon a Violet,
His paunch upon a Pansy.
Some merry Elfin passing by
At sight of him were sore affrighted,
And would have fled ; until he said,
“ My little dears, if you knew why
I look to heaven thus and sigh,
I think that you would be delighted.
The Stars rise up and fall, the Stars
Do shine in pools and stilly places,
The Lilies blink on sandy bars,
The Midges move in flickering mazes ;
But I profoundly pore upon,
And reason, think, and cogitate,
And marvel, muse, and meditate,
Why had the ancient Mastodon
So few sad hairs upon his pate ? ”

PUCK AND THE CROCODILE.

Dedicated to the Godly.

Puck, wandering on the banks of Nile,
Beheld one day a Crocodile,
That with heart-wringing sighs and sobs,
With groans and cries and throes and throbs,
Made moan, until his rushing tears
Ran down the wrinkles of the sand.
“What ails thee, Monster?” made demand
The Sprite, “and why these million tears?”
“I weep, I shriek,” the other cries,
“To see the World’s iniquities.”
“And I with you,” the Elf replies.
“The World,” resumed the Crocodile,
“Is full of Cruelty and Guile.”
“Except for you,” Puck said, “it’s vile.”
“Honour and Chivalry are dead;
The Soul of Pity vanished.”
“Save in yourself, Sir,” Robin said.
“How are the Righteous much abhor’d,
And silent still the Godly Word!”
“Not while you live,” the Sprite aver’d.
“My friend, I thank you,” said the Beast;
“I think you sympathise at least.
The world is evil—pray beware—
How fat you are, I do declare!
God grant us all some day remission—
I vow you’re in a fine condition.
I think that all—I must say that
For a fairy you are very fat.
What unctuous food—excuse me, friend—
You fays must find in fairy land!

As I was saying, all is not—
Fie, what a toothache I have got !
See here, this molar. Pray look nearer,
And you shall see the bad place clearer.
Nay, if you could but just creep in
And say which tooth the mischief's in.”
“ No, thank you, friend,” our Puck replied ;
“ I'll keep upon the outer side.
With many large-soul'd folk I've met
I've found the stomach's larger yet ;
And when the Righteous talk of Sin
Look to your pockets or your skin.”

THE MAN, THE LION, AND THE FLY.

Dedicated to Reformers.

There was a Man to wisdom dead
Who took a mad thought in his head—
“ A second Hercules I,” he said.
“ Behold,” he cried, “ I will go forth
From east to west, from south to north,
And with this knotted bludgeon bash
The Things that Sting, and those that Gnash
Blood-dripping teeth, and Giants glum
So mighty that with finger and thumb
They pick and eat chance passengers,
And I will slay each thing that stirs
To grief of man and dole of beast,
Until the world from wrong released
Pronounce me Emperor at least.”

But as he spoke, upon the way
A casual Lion chanced to stray,
Just as on any other day ;
And he, to measure of his thought
In ready deed inferior nought,
Sprang at him furious, and they fought.

Three hours they fought, until the sun
Ymounted in the vault begun
To make them wish that they had done.
“ Friend,” quoth the Lion, “ or why foe,
Upon my word I do not know,
If we fight more we melt, I trow.”
“ A little grace,” the Man replied,
Wiping his brow, “ is not denied ;
You’ll have but little when you’ve died.”

So each beneath a tree disposed
Took ease. The languid Lion dozed.
The Man, who should have done likewise
(So says the Saga that is wise),
Was waked each time he sued repose
By a great Fly upon his nose.
First in the one ear then in t'other
The winged monster buzz'd with bother ;
The twitching tender nostrils tried,
The corners of the lips beside ;
From lip to eyelid leapt with fuss,
Like old dame in an omnibus ;
Delighted vastly to have met
So great a store of unctuous sweat.
At last to desperation driven
The Man accursed the Fly to Heaven,
And with his bludgeon great assay'd
To stay the small annoying raid.
Wielding to right and left he smote ;
But still the nimble Fly, remote,
Laughed at his anger and enjoy'd
Fresh perspiration.

Thus annoy'd,
His bludgeon broken on the tree,
A helpless, weary wight was he.
The Lion rose, refresh'd, with glee ;
“ I'm ready now,” he said, “ my man,
To end the work the Fly began.”
And this (the Chronicler explains)
Is why the Lion still remains.

ORPHEUS AND THE BUSY ONES.

Dedicated to the Public.

Orpheus, the Stygian current cross'd,
When Hell stood still to hear him sing,
Torn from Eurydice twice lost
(Almost by music saved e'er lost)
Over the world went wandering.
One day, sate on a mountain slope,
Weary and sick for want of hope,
(Or rather, shall we term it, dead,
Since life is gone when hope is sped),
He twang'd his lyre ; till song sublime
Out of the ashes of his prime
And fire of grief like Phœnix sprang ;
And all the startled hillside rang.
Aroused, the dew-engrossèd Flowers
Turn'd to him all their maiden eyes ;
And from the sweet forgotten bowers
Flew forth a thousand Butterflies.
The Trees forgot their roots. Beneath,
The noisy Crickets of the heath
Rub'd each his forehead with amaze
To hear one sing such heavenly lays.
Under her stone the lumpy Toad
Peer'd forth ; even the solid sod
Grew peopled with emerging Worms—
Such power hath Music on all forms.
Above, the pinchèd Pard amort
(She had three cublings in a den)
Forgot her hunger, and in short
Reposed herself to listen then,
Upon her furry paws her chin ;
And from her vantage watch'd the Poet,

Delighted, but enraged to know it,
While all her spotted sleek of skin
Heaved with the pleasure she took in.
Not only this, but shall I say't,
The very Hills began debate
Whether, to hear the singing clearer,
They should not move a little nearer.

Only the Bard, to these strange ways
Accustom'd, noted with amaze
A herd of Hogs that near him fed,
Which might for all he sang be dead.
He ceased his song and tried the scale
To find out where his voice might fail ;
His lyre divine descanted soon
To see the strings were all in tune ;
Till satisfied that these were right,
And at those Hogs astonish'd quite
That they not to his conquering lyre,
Which all things else did so admire,
Gave heed, but routed in the rye
As tho' he had not been close by,
He ask'd of them the reason why.
“ Good friend,” a Bacon old replied,
“ We have too much to do beside ;
The roots are many, the field is wide.
Should we neglect this plenteousness
We should be wrong, you must confess—
The gods some day might give us less.
Our girth is great ; the fodder free ;
This field of food must finished be.
That time is short you'll not deny.
We eat but little ere we die.”

THE POET AND THE PENMAN.

Dedicated to Critics.

All night had browsed the Pinion'd Steed
Upon that lush and level mead
That swathes Parnassus' feet ;
Till, when the pranksome Morning Star
To van of Day's slow-driven car
Came piping past the eastern bar,
A Poet him did greet.

"Your back, my Pegasus," he cried,
"Shall win me to the tiers espied
Of yonder shelfed hill,
Where all the Great are, I opine,
And on the last proud peak divine
Apollo and the Earnest Nine
At songs symphonic still."

Tomes had the Poet, rolls and wraps,
Pens at his ears, and scribbled scraps,
And so essay'd the mounting.
"Stand still, O Steed, and I will climb,
Tho' weighted here with pounds of rhyme,
If you will only give me time,
Who'd been on stirrups counting."

The Steed stood still ; the thing was done ;
He slid, slip'd and shuffled on,
And stay'd to pen his deeds.
When now the Monster's patience wears,
He lowers his head, his haunches rears ;
And, flying past the Stallion's ears,
The Poet measures weeds.

Three times attempting, three times foil'd,
The Bard beheld his breeches soil'd ;
And on his knees the mashed green
Gave an arch proof of what had been ;
And winds like gamboling babes unseen
Made all his errant sheets revolve.
For now the Morning 'gan to solve
The long-strewn sands of heav'nly cloud ;
And that fair Mountain noble brow'd,
In snowy, silv'ry laces dight
Shone like a bride, against the night
Unveil'd, with many-pointed light.
And lo ! half seen thro' level mist
A Critic rode with saucy wrist,
Plump, smug and smooth and portly, dress'd
In corduroys and velvet vest ;
Who clip'd at ease an ambling cob
With dappled nose and ears alob ;
While all around a barking brood
Of puppies nuzzled in the rood.
“ He who to climb has climbing blood
Must fear no fall in marish mud ;
And he who phantoms fain would ride
May sometimes sit the ground,” he cried.

At this his thighs the Poet slam'd
And papers in his pocket ram'd ;
“ Be off,” he said, “ or else be damn'd.”
“ You lose your time,” resumed the Man,
Whose oozing eyes with mirth o'erran ;
“ You waste your time about that Brute
Whom, if 'twere mine—egad ! I'd shoot,
So gaunt and gall'd a hack is he,
But take example now from me,
Who riding in this airy plight
For breakfast get an appetite ;

And sitting here (I am so sly)
With this my pocket-sextant I
Take altitude of those on high.”
“ Pedant, avaunt ! ” the Poet cries,
And mounting shoots towards the skies
An angry palm. “ Come not anear !
I, as toward the marineer
The welcome star from beacon’d brows
Of headland, when the Northern blows
His scurrilous, spitting spray in air,
And lobbing billows blotch the Bear,
Appears, so shall appear and shine
Thro’ streaming rain and hissing brine
To cheer the coming better blood ;
And shall be fire when thou art mud ! ”

“ Blind is the goose that play’s the geyser
And tried to see the white sun nigher.
He flapping lies ; so shall you lie
And grovel as you think to fly.”
The other cries ; whose Nag amazed,
Viewing the winged Stallion, gazed,
Shook out her tail and with a snort,
Approaching in plebeian sort,
Paw’d archly at him. He with scorn
And having too long mildly borne,
Rear’d, spread his wings, and buck’d and neigh’d.
She with the monstrous tone affray’d
Shot forth her rider like a ball ;
Who in the mid-air, ere his fall,
The like-projected Poet met.

As when two Suns in furious set
Together dash with whirl and wind,
Their shrieking planets drawn behind ;

Or two great Blacks with blinding rage,
Each dragging his black wife, engage,
And clash their pates upon the green
(The fleas being heard to crack between),
The Critic so and Bard pell-mell
Fighting concuss'd and fighting fell ;
And puppies tug'd their tatters.
Bruises for breakfast got the one ;
Black eyes the other, and of Fame none.
They fought it out, and when they'd done
Went home as rough as ratters.

THE PITEOUS EWE

Dedicated to Kings

King Lion yawning at his gates
On deep-empilèd mosses, when
The sunset gilt the underwood,
Awaking claw'd in idle mood
The frighten'd dead leaves of his den,
Content ; when lo (the Rune relates)
A tiny piercing note was heard.
It was the Mouse (the Rune aver'd)
Who saved the Sov'reign's honour when
The hunters mesh'd him in the glen.
For that admitted now to cheep
Before the Audience half asleep,
She introduced a weeping Sheep.

“ Sire,” said the Mouse, “ with much ado
Thro' wicked guards I bring to you
This much wrong'd creature to implore
Justice against the evil-doer.”
At this, no rhetorician,
The shiv'ring Mutton then began
Of how three lovely Lambkins lost
The Wolf had taken to his den,
Deep-delvèd in a dreadful glen—
And ah ! to her the bitter cost !
One from her side when day was dead
The monster stole. Another took
At gambol in the glassing brook.
The third, the Mother's last delight,
When now the many-lampèd Night
No more, with mystic moon aloft,
Gave shudd'ring shadows to the flowers

And stars of wan irradiance soft
To every dewdrop ; but the hours
Of Dawn and Daybreak, Sister Hours,
Twin Lovelinesses, lit the world,
And the confident buds unfurl'd,
He seized with mangling tushes, till
The innocent flower-eyes of the wood,
That wont with early dew to fill,
Grew piteous-wet with tears of blood ;
The mother helpless. So he rush'd
With shaggy flanks, and snarling gnash'd
The gripping teeth that gleam'd between
His cruel red lips scarcely seen,
While springing branches clash'd behind,
And left her weeping to the wind.

“ Ho ! ” roar'd the Monarch, “ call the Court !
With this black ruffian I'll be short.
How often have I giv'n command
The young shall not be taken ”—and
His thunder rang across the land,
Until the forest flowers for fear
Shut up their petals not to hear.

Then his gay Herald, the Macaw,
Screams out the hest from hill to haugh,
And from a thousand dellèd dens
Run forth his frighten'd denizens
To share the Council, or to know
What makes the Monarch bellow so.
And, as they gather, to and fro
He paces, and his red eyes flash
Enough to turn them all to ash.
Arranged before him in a row
They take their places, high and low.

The Wicked Wolf between his guards,
 Two grave and stalwart Leopards,
 Stands tip-toe, snarling, and repeating
 It was not he who did the eating ;
 And, with his tail between his legs,
 For justice, justice only, begs.
 " You or another," roar'd the King,
 " I'll find the one who did the thing.
 But first, Sir Premier, please reply
 (A Constitutional Monarch I)
 Why do you let my people die ? "
 At this, with deference, said the Bear,
 'Twas not his fault—he was not there.
 Still lab'ring in affairs of state
 To make the kingdom good and great
 (Altho' the wicked Opposition
 Did ever thwart him in his mission),
 A sleepless eye he always cast
 Upon the future and the past
 To frustrate—hard for anyone—
 What the Last Government had done.
 At present he'd in contemplation
 Some mighty measures for the nation—
 To bring the Butterflies to terms
 By giving franchise to the Worms ;
 To teach the Gnats to carry logs ;
 To give self-government to Hogs
 Because they had resolved to Shirk,
 With noble Scorn, ignoble Work ;
 To succour Wildcats, and to keep
 The Wolves secure against the sheep.
 And here he thought he smelt a plot :
 This trivial matter, was it not
 A little juggle to discredit
 This last great measure ?—There, he'd said it.

But still his heart bled at the woe
Occasion'd by his Party's foe.

At this the Tiger shriek'd with rage
(The while his Secret'ry the Fox
Took papers from his office box).
" Unhappy land ! accurs'd age ! "
He cried. " You seek to murder me
With weight of brute majority ;
And me not only, but the cause
Of Pity, Justice, and the Laws !
Take back the charges you impute ;
It is not I but you who do't.
When we controll'd the Sov'reign's land
The sun was bright, the breeze was bland.
The roving Heifer, free from care,
Scarce needed sniff th' untainted air
For danger, and the young Gazelle
Drank heedless at the hidden well ;
And even I with happy smile
Would lay me down to slumber, while
The careless Lambkins gambol'd round,
And Peace and Plenty blest the ground !

With this fine eloquence inflamed
The rival factions loudly named
Each other Brute, and (it is said)
Would soon have killed each other dead :
But now the Boar with growl and grunt
And bristling juba leapt to front.
" Accursed both ! " he cried. " What, what !
Think you, ye fools, we know you not ?
Each canting, lying partisan,
Who prates of Mercy and the Law
With merciless and murd'rous maw,

Will always eat us when he can—
 Us, who with boon and bloodless toil
 Seek but the acorns for our spoil—
 Were not our eyes and tushes bright
 To quell such bandits of the night.
 Why, e'en the Monarch—”

Here a roar

From all the Council check'd the Boar ;
 And soon the King with pensive mien
 Said, “ This is not the way, I ween,
 To reach the truth—more difficult
 Than we supposed. Let us consult
 Our learned Judge, Lord Elephant.”

So he advances, complaisant
 With rocky brow, and at his ear
 A pen as long as any spear ;
 Small eyes that saw behind the Truth
 Convenience ; and, as if to soothe
 Dissension, with a swaying motion
 From side to side. “ Sire, I've a notion,”
 He said, “ there is no case at all.
 The plaintiff can no witness call,
 And hers the only evidence,
 Which, rightly sifted, has no sense.
 For in the night she says he took
 Her first, her second in the brook.
 How could she see him in the dark ?
 And for the second, pray you mark,
 Perhaps it was more likely drown'd.
 As for the third, when she look'd round,
 He'd gone : how did she know him then ?
 This is of fancy, not of ken.
 Moreover, in th' alternative,
 Sir Wolf can plead he could not live

Because the din the lambkins made
 About him slumb'ring in the shade.
 As for the much-bereavèd Dame—
 With whom I deeply sympathise—
 Such sorrow wets my foolish eyes,
 I fear she may be thought to blame
 Because she troubled Majesty
 Before she had instructed me
 (Of course I ridicule the fee) ;
 And I should be prepared, in short,
 To hear it argued in the Court
 Whether she did not bring the charge
 In order merely to discharge
 An ancient grudge against her foe.”
 “ Enough ! and let the prisoner go ! ”
 The Sov'reign said. “ And as for you,
 Dishonest and malignant Ewe,
 We do not order you to death
 (Whate'er your conduct meriteth)
 Only because it pleaseth us
 To show we are magnanimous.”
 (He was indeed much praised for that,
 And more because the Sheep was fat).
 “ Break up the Court. Enough of worry,
 It's time to dine, so let's be merry.”

With that they shifted in a hurry ;
 But in the scramble no one knew
 (So says the Saga that is true)
 What happen'd to the Piteous Ewe.

THE CONTEST OF BIRDS.

Dedicated to all the Excellent.

The Eagle which at Jove's right hand
Was wont to take imperial stand,
Proud of his perch, and with fond beak
The Thund'rer's fondling finger tweak,
Or blinking in sage thought t' assume
Half sov'reignty and weigh the doom,
Was sick ; for for the World he sigh'd,
His Mountains and his Forests wide ;
So true it is, not Jove's right hand
Is worth to us our Native Land,
And that the Little we have not
Can make the Much we have forgot.

Therefore to earth with arching vans,
Released a while, the sky he spans
In flight ; sinks thro' the tempest ; takes
The feather-fretting aid of wind ;
And now, new born with pleasure, breaks
Upon a beauteous Vale confined.

Now it is said that on that day
All Birds that are had ceased their play,
And question'd, each with heat and brawl,
Which was the noblest of them all :
Who when they saw the Eagle stand
Amidst them (now unused to stand
Upon the dull, flat, level earth)
Burst into loud, contemptuous mirth.
“ It seems,” exclaimed a civil Crow,
“ You come here, friend, quite *à propos*.

For we discuss'd the noblest here,
 And you are truly the most queer.
 Your wings and tail, excuse me, friend,
 Seem too long for your other end.
 Pray change your—if I may suggest—
 Your tailor and be better dress'd.
 Look at myself, how neat I go,
 And in the latest fashion too.”
 “ Or were your plumes, my friend, more bright
 We could excuse your homely plight.”
 The Peacock said : “ Pray just admire
 My plumes of azure, gold and fire.
 My dames about me ever move
 In wonder, and confess their love.
 Whene'er I show myself,” said he,
 “ The gods look down from Heaven to see.”
 “ Base virtues of the body ! ” cried
 The Parrot. “ Is the soul denied ?
 Know friend that beauteous words are worth
 More than these qualities of earth.
 How wise I am admire, and know
 It is by study I am so.
 Still lost in contemplation I
 Discuss at large the earth and sky ;
 Can talk of wonders without end,
 More even than I comprehend ;
 Or say the wisest words, I ween,
 Although I don't know what they mean.”
 “ Pshaw ! ” said the Vulture, “ fair or wise,
 Some day you shall become my prize.
 Your merits shall be mine, 'od shake 'em,
 Whenever I may choose to take 'em ;
 And when I have digested you
 Your wisdom shall become mine too.
 As for our friend, the new arrival,

If he contend to be my rival,
Let's fight it out in heaven's name ! ”
“ What base arbitrament ! for shame ! ”
Exclaimed the mincing Nightingale.
“ If he aspire let him prevail
Against me in the test of song
Where he who triumphs is most strong.”
“ Beware of pride,” the Dodo said ;
“ I see that all of you are led
Astray by arrogance. For me,
I glory in humility.
I am so humble I confess
My utter wicked worthlessness.
I say with tears ”—and here he blows
The part that should have been his nose—
“ I say with tears I dote upon
Being beaten, bruised and trampled on.
I love to be reminded still
Of all my faults and treated ill.
So 'tis, I think, confess'd by all
My virtue's not equivocal.”
“ To me,” the lofty Stork aver'd,
“ This seems a most plebeian bird,
With nails so long and legs so short,
He cannot be of noble sort ;
Tho' in his nose, I must confess,
I see some sign of gentleness.
I cannot really stoop so far
(Whom all the Frogs and Mice in war
Already have confess'd their king)
As rival this uncrownèd thing.
My subjects would at once repine
Nor let me eat 'em, I opine,
As all contented subjects should,
Did I disgrace my royal blood.”

Which heard, the fiery Eagle's eyes
With noble anger and surprise
Flash'd out. "Still dear what is most cheap
Ye little woodland creatures keep,"
He cried ; and flung aloft his head,
Gazed up to heaven, his pinions spread
(The wind of which made timorous stir
Among the things that round him were),
And leaping on the air begun
Ascent, and vanish'd in the sun.

ALASTOR.

'Tis said that a noble Youth of old
Was to his native village lost
And to his home and aged sire :
For he had wander'd (it is told)
Where, pinnacled in eternal Frost,
Apollo leads his awful Choir.

Awful, for nought of human warms
The Agony of Their Song sublime,
Which like the breath of Ice is given,
Ascending in vapour from all forms,
Where Gods in clear alternate chime
Reveal Their mystery-thoughts to Heaven.

Nor in those regions of windless Cold
Is fiery the Sun tho' fierce in light ;
But frozen-pale the numbèd Moon
Wanders along the ridges that fold
Enormous Peaks, what time the Night
Rivals with all her stars the Noon.

For there, not dimly as here, the Stars,
But globèd and azure and crimson tinct,
Climb up the windless wastes of Snow,
Gold-footed, or thro' the long-drawn bars
Of mountain Mist with eyes unblinked
And scorn, gaze down on the world below.

Or high on the topmost Peak and end
Of ranges stand with sudden blaze,
Like Angels born in spontaneous birth ;
Or wrap themselves in flame and descend
Between black foreheads of Rock in haze,
Slowly like grievèd gods to earth.

And there for ever the patient Wind
Rakes up the crystals of dry Snow,
And mourns for ever her work undone ;
And there for ever, like Titans blind
Their countenance lifting to Heaven's glow,
The sightless Mountains yearn for the Sun.

He heard, he saw. Not to the air
Dared breathe a breath ; but with his sight
Wreak'd on Immortals mortal wrong,
And dared to see them as they were—
The black Peaks blacken'd in their light,
The white Stars flashing with their song.

So fled. But when revealing Morn
Show'd him, descended, Giant grown,
Men ant-like, petty, mean and weak,
He rush'd returning. Then in scorn
Th' Immortals smote him to a Stone
That aches for ever on the Peak.

There nightly the numbèd Eagle quells
(Full-feathered to his feet of horn),
His swooning eye, his eyrie won,
And slumbers, frozen by frosty spells
Fast to the pinnacle ; but at Morn
Unfettered leaps towards the Sun.

THE POET'S RETIREMENT.

Dedicated (with misgivings) to Urania.

Down from that blithe Idalian Hill
Where Violets drink of dew their fill,
And wading thro' wet eastern flowers
With wash'd feet Eos and the Hours
Come laughing down, I laughing came.

The Morn had now her threads of flame
Inlaid to Earth's green tapestries,
Gold-inwoven ; and to their knees
In chilly baths of thridding rills
At tremble stood luce Daffodils ;
When lo ! I mark'd toward me move
Those Maidens Three whom poets love.

“ O whither away, glad Youth,” they cried,
“ Singing thro' daffodils dost thou stride ? ”
“ Ladies, I wander for a while ”—
And here I duck'd and doff'd in style—
“ I wander by Bourn, I wander by Byre,
By Cape and Cote and Castle Spire ;
Or sometime stick in puddled Mire ;
Or climb the summits of Snow and Fire ;
Or where the hoarse moon-madden'd Tides
Drench dripping jags on Mountain sides ;
Or twanging strings sound gay reprieve
To smoky Villages at eve,
What time the paddock'd Ass careers,
Mirthful, with high-prickt tail and ears,
And slow toward their wattled home
The baaing Sheep do go, I roam.
And I have left behind me there
Hippocrates teaching the air ;

And Learning prim ; and Venus, too,
Now whipping Cupid with her shoe."

Then, of those slipper'd Maidens, She,
Robed in flush rose-red, answer'd me,
Who brightly gazing with mild look
Held still a finger-parted book.
"Come, then," she cried, "with me and dwell
In my Valley of Asphodel,
Which is a land of laughing rills
And hung about with dazzling hills,
Where oft the Swain with garter'd legs
Piping for love in music begs,
Nor Thisbe turns her petulant ear.
There large-eyed Plato thou may'st hear
Persuade, or, if not idly awed,
Masters a Master's theme applaud.
And then, if Thunder more invite
Than silver-threaded rain's delight
And sloping seats of knollèd moss,
Come where some thwarted Torrent toss
Thro' cloven Gorges, mad to shake
The shagreen'd Boulders black and break
The gleaming silence of the Lake.
Or, if engross'd with human Fate,
On rangèd boards mark Love and Hate,
Egg on to midnight-living crime,
And glaring Horrors of dead time
Creep in behind. Or, restive still,
Unlocked from Hell soar Heaven hill
Thro' sun-outstaring Cherubim."

"Not so," cried one, a Virgin slim,
Plumed, wrap'd, and robed in the gold-green
Thro' sunset-dazèd woodlands seen :

Who half upon her dinted breast
Apollo sculpt in little press'd,
“ Come to my House of all delights,
Whose marble Stairs with mergèd flights
Are shallow'd in the viewless Lake ;
Whose overpeering Turrets take
The peep of Dawn, or flashing turn
To Eve departing golden scorn.
There fairy-fluted Pillars soar
To cloudy Roofs of limnèd lore,
And Walls are window'd with rare 'scapes
And rich designs ; of blazon'd Capes
Pawing the sunset-burnish'd flood ;
Of rib-rail'd reaches of Solitude ;
Of rounded World and globèd Skies,
And Stars between, and faint Moonrise ;
Of black Tarns set mid mountain peaks
And spouting silver-foamèd leaks ;
Of Gods reclined, and Maids who move,
Unlidding lustrous eyes of love ;
Of War ; of Wisdom with a skull.
And in the high aisles Fountains full
Disperse a stream of coolness there
For frosted fern and maidenhair,
And sculptured Beauty holds the way.
So thither go with me to-day.”

Then She who all in purple dight,
Brow-star'd with orbèd ruby light,
Lifted from under rich deep locks
Looks wrapt on Heaven, to earthly shocks
Descending, thus replied : “ Not these
Flat, hapless lands of Towers and Trees
May past the morn your spirit please.
But to some cold Crag, that doth lift
His brow to heav'n above the drift,

And turns beneath the mistless Stars,
 Come. There no dew distilling mars
 With felon fog or frozen haze
 The many-hued Sidereal blaze,
 Where Planets pale not age to age,
 And moonèd Venus in white rage
 Stares down the dawn. Come ; for that Glow
 There solves to unpolluted flow
 The crumbling crystals of the snow ;
 And windworn Cataracts wavering plumb
 To lightless pine-valleys. Come, O come !
 Lest those faint Harmonies be unheard
 Which, as from silver and gold strings stir'd
 By the light fingers of the Wind,
 Run from the poised orbs swiftly spin'd."

She ceased, and with her finger tip
 Made sound the lyre upon her hip,
 And would have sung ; but I replied,
 " To be unchosen is descried ;
 And we shall be made mad in Heaven
 By need of choice of good things given.
 I love all Three so passing well,
 Which I love best I cannot tell.
 Alas ! " I cried, but checked the word,
 For close behind a footstep heard
 Compel'd me turn ; when lo ! that Maid,
 Dress'd in black velvet, who bewray'd
 Plump Popes and Pastors once to fear,
 Came up and took me by the ear.
 " Is this the way ? " she cried. " You waste
 Time should be spent in huddling haste
 To harry Ignorance to her den,
 Or pink fat Folly with the pen.
 Small, unobservèd things to use,
 Each with its little mite of news,

To build that sheer hypothesis
Whose base on righteous Reason is,
Whose point among the Stars. For shame !
Enough the seeming-serious game.
But search the Depths ; and for thy meed,
A place among the men indeed."

ANOTHER LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

When, roused at last, long-pondered Jove
 The heav'n-disdaining Germans drove
 Before the banded Sons of Light,
 Led by the Phantom, Freedom hight ;
 All Creatures that make endless War
 In Dale and Forest, Scarp and Scaur,
 Or in the Cloud-Bedangled Air,
 Resolved in High Confederacy
 Eternal Peace and Amity
 In Freedom's bonds to serve and swear—
 Just as we Men do everywhere.
 The Lion lay down with the Lamb ;
 The Tiger bow'd before her Dam ;
 The Vulture to the Stockdove sigh'd
 That he would be her friend and guide :
 The Wolf declared that for his part
 There was no evil in his heart ;
 The Fox expounded to the Geese
 How he had labour'd for the Peace ;
 And on the throng'd Gangetic Isles
 A myriad artless Crocodiles
 Emerging yawn'd reptilian Smiles.

When he beheld th' Enthusiasm,
 Jove flung his Thunders in the Chasm
 Of that Eternal Fire that burns
 Before his Feet—whose Smoke upturns
 And mingles with the Wraiths of Snow
 That wind-blown o'er Olympus go
 For ever—that eternal Fire
 Where all the shrinking Past expires,
 Mountains and Suns and Oceans—aye,
 Beauty and Love and Friendship die.

So in that Fire of Fate he hurl'd
His Thunderbolts, and cried, "The World
In this Democracy built anew"
Has now no more a need for you."
He laugh'd, and all th' enfranchised Earth
Hum'd forth a chorus to his mirth ;
And high th' exultant Flame outshone
From Pindus unto Pelion.
Only his Eagle at his right hand
Deign'd not t' obey the God's command,
But his red eye ranged like the Sun
Through Thunderclouds when day is done.

But now, alas ! a sense of Dearth
O'erspread the happy realms of Earth.
The Lion said, "'Tis curious quite
How Virtue whets my Appetite."
The Leopard to his friend the Fawn
Observed he'd fasted since the dawn.
The Heron to the Fish aver'd
He was a good but hungry bird.
The Hawk asserted to the Pigeon
His consolation was Religion.
To these the Ox, to keep them quiet,
Prescribed a Vegetarian Diet ;
The Monkey to the Fox suggested
Sour Grapes were easily digested ;
And his politic friend, the Ass,
Advised the Lion to eat Grass.
At which the Pelican scratched his pate,
Maintain'd such jests were out of date,
And said that Wit could never be
Allow'd in a Democracy.
So then the tumult 'gan to grow—
Each would or would not have it so.

The Bear avow'd it was not fair
 For Birds to bound about in Air,
 And let the Fishes leave the Sea,
 If they desired Equality.
 To which the Falcon made reply
 " 'Twere better sure for you to fly ! "
 " Or learn to swim," the Porpoise puff'd.
 At this the Birds and Fishes laugh'd,
 The Beasts grew angry. Then the Ant
 With scorn address'd the Elephant,
 " Though not more virtuous, active, wise,
 You are a Profligate in Size ! "
 At which upsprang th' outrageous Boar
 And grunted, " Good as all, and more,
 I challenge everyone to War ! "
 So then they went at it pell-mell,
 Just as before the League befell.

And laughing Jove reach'd forth an arm
 And took new, living Lightnings, warm
 And limber, from the fuming Urn
 Wherein the Destinies are born ;
 And said, " One thing is worse than War,
 The Worm that works beneath to mar
 The deep Design of Things that Are."
 And from the empyrean Air
 He smote the Creature crawling there,
 Licence and her Ape-Father'd Brood,
 The Cruel, Crafty, Craven, Lewd,
 And Liars in their multitude,
 Who tell men Duty is no more,
 And Self's the God they should adore.

THE MORNING POST,

14th February, 1919.

THE ALEKTRYONIAD.

HOW THE WEATHERCOCK CAME ON THE STEEPLE.

An Epic Poem.

Argument.

The Cook and Cock at War. Aloft
 He reigns at last the Winner ;
 And that is why the Gods so oft
 Come down to Earth for dinner.

I

Sir Brazenbil he was
 A Cock of great renown ;
 He crow'd all day because
 He felt he pleased the Town.

“ Whenever I give,” said he,
 “ A roystering right-down cheerer,
 They all run after me
 To try and hear me nearer.

But yet I do complain
 That when I'm tired of singing,
 To make me sing again
 They take to brickbat flinging.”

“ O hang it ! ” said the Cook ;
 “ O dang the Cock ! ” the Cook said.
 “ By parson, prayer and book,
 He shall be soundly rucksèd.”

She threw the toasting jock ;
 He jump'd until the dresser,
 Down came the kitchen clock,
 And eke she, all a messer.

At this the Butler swore
She should have reparation ;
But, slipping on the floor,
Fell bump on his foundation.

Which when the Maid did see
She round the bucket wrenchèd ;
But Cook and Butler she
Most pitifully drenched.

The Flunkey, Thomas, who
To love her did aspire,
Pursued the Songster too,
Until his tails caught fire.

II.

Now grew the grievous din
And grew the gruesome rattle.
The Neighbours, rushing in,
Did aggravate the battle.

They heaved about the plates,
And hurl'd at him the saucers ;
But still the coming fates
In time he always saw, sirs.

He bounded there and here
And always did avoid 'em ;
And yell'd his chanticleer
Above, beneath, beside 'em ;

As when a Hero strides
Upon his fallen foemen,
And shouts to all besides
His thundering cognomen.

But now the Cook, e'en she
 Who first began the battle
 Said, " Neighbours leave to me
 The casting o' this cattle."

Her face was set and stern ;
 She seized the massy Frypan ;
 " Now, Cocky, 'tis your turn
 To crow no more, but die, man."

Quod she, " Come on, I'll match you.
 For over long you've boasted ;
 In the same pan I catch you,
 I swear you shall be roasted."

Amazed, with fear he fled
 And bounded thro' the window ;
 " They love me so," he said,
 " They want to have me skin'd, O."

So up and down they rush,
 And in and out and under ;
 And all the people hush
 To contemplate the wonder.

III

Say then, O Lofty Bard,
 Who won the chase immortal ?
 Or th' Tyrant of the Yard,
 Or th' Tyrantess of Turtle

Say how he shed in air
 His beautiful tail feathers,
 Until he left quite bare
 The region of his nethers.

Say how from off her form
Her petticoat was scatter'd,
Disclosing every charm
And amplitude, tho' tatter'd.

For hear, each Bachelor,
Who else might be offended,
Her underwear she wore
Most beautifully mended.

At last amid the town
There was a mighty strong stir ;
She clap'd the frypan down
Right on the cackling Songster.

But Fate enabled him
To disappoint the people—
He slip'd beneath the brim
And flew upon the steeple.

And safely perch'd aloft,
In insolence the victor
Crow'd furiously and oft,
Loud as a steam-ejector.

Till passing Jove, engaged
At sight of her dimensions,
Was mightily enraged
Against the Cock's pretensions.

And so it came to pass
That full of wrath and leaven,
He turned the Cock to brass
And took the Cook to heaven.

MISTRESS MACRAW.

The Mate's Yarn.

Mistress Macraw was nae that braw
That she had used to bin ;
For wilka cause her sneckit naws
Was muckle set agin
Things as are frisky—sic as whiskey
Or any venial sin.
(So pass along the bottle—O)

Noo Johnnie Macraw wasna bad at a',
But crackit his glass o'coorse.
His mate an' crew frequently drew
Refreshment from that soorce.
In fact, his sheep wad never keep
A varra unwavering coorse.

For she'd veer and yaw, said Johnnie Macraw,
In a most onaccountable way,
And come right to, in spite o' the crew,
When she ought to be lyin' away ;
And roll that free in a level sea
'Twas enough to make 'em pray.

Noo when the Missis ken'd how this is,
She up and spak' right on.
“ There's something wrang the crew amang
An' wrang with you, my mon ;
I'll sail the sea, my lads, with ye
An' sneck out what is on.”

They represent with tears ahent
The dangers of the deep,
An' lay out tales of sharks and whales
To make her fleshy creep.
Without a word she cam' aboard
An' rectified the sheep.

They ha' sailt awa' from the land and a',
They ha' bravely putt to sea ;
On upright keel she sailt right weel
Surprising for to see.
Th' auld wife remarkt the vessel warkt
Ancommonly well on tea.

She ha' taken the deck wi' great effec' ;
Her will was hard to bear ;
Eight bells an' foor she ha' call'd 'em to her
An' gied 'em tea wi' prayer ;
She ha' stappit their chew an' whiskey too,
An' driven 'em to despair.

She ha' putt 'em in boots an' Sunday suits,
An' told 'em not to swear ;
She ha' tied the knots about their throats,
An' gied 'em a sheepish air ;
But when, by Gosh, she made 'em wash,
It was too much to bear.

Noo Johnnie the gudgeon was sair in dudgeon—
The sheep was not his ain ;
For the want of his whiskey he felt a promisky,
Curiosest sort of pain ;
So what did he do but tamper his crew—
Who all of 'em felt the same.

By way of a *coup* they rusht on the poop
With muskits to do or to dee,
But for want of the speerit it later appeerit
That they quail'd at the power of her ee ;
Then, what was so queer, she tuck each by the ear
And spak' to him dourly and free.

Not a jok, not a word, not a whisper, was heard,
Not the sound of a smile in the dark.
From her station abaft she govern'd the craft,
They lairnt many things about wark.
The flash of her ee was awful and dree,
An' lay like a doom on the bark.

To Heaven be praise, there's an end o' those days—
In this way it cam' they pass'd oor.
'Twas Cape Gardafui lay onder the lea
Where soundings run right out befoor ;
The mon at the wheel saw the thing in a deal
And ran her right on to the shoor.

Noo I alwez have found this plaver is sound
From Tokio to Sanfrancisky,
Though maybe 'tis thocht I'm nowt but a Scoht,
Yet it's no guid to try what is risky.
One cannot defy with *impunity*
The bawbees, kirk-elders, and whiskey.

For Mistress Macraw was muckle and braw
Wi' sichlike puir creatures as men ;
But for want of the liquor she wasna sae sicker
If't blew half a capful, or when
It cam' to a question of speedy digestion
By sharks, in fathoms ten.

And we ventured to smile with something of guile,
 And each behind his hand,
 When she open'd her throat and call'd for the bot,
 And yell'd to be putt on the land ;
 For she thocht we sh'u'd sink before we c'u'd wink,
 When we'd only run saft on the sand.

So we putt her to land by her ain command,
 Wi' campstool and 'brella and a',
 With a bottle of tea for legacy
 By forethought of Johnnie Macraw ;
 But we out wi' the bower and haul'd the sheep ower
 And up with our sails and awa'.

But this I must state—and it's sad to relate—
 The blackamoors cam' from the hills,
 And daring to risk it (when eating a biscuit)
 They carried her back to their hills ;
 From which moment they date, historians relate,
 The pairiod of all their ills.

For though at the first she was likely to burst
 Wi' calling 'em names meant to rile,
 She took to it kind when she cam for to find
 That their habits in liquor were vile ;
 An' the power of her ee soon turn'd 'em to tea
 In a way that wad mak' you smile.

She drest 'em in chokers like mission'ry croakers,
 And taught 'em the hymn-singing game ;
 Till the tribe that had been the thirstiest seen
 Took to teaching and prayer, and became
 As docile as rabbits to tay-tottal habits,
 And almost in love wi' the same.

But they made none the less a great wilderness
Around them, though not wi' the sword ;
For their teaching symbolic gave Satan the colic,
And the way they would twang on the word
Confair'd desolation on aivory nation
From the mountain to the sea-board.

But when Johnnie Macraw and his jolly men saw
What chances had come to his dearie,
They open'd the lockers an' tuck a few knockers
To lift aff the feelin' o' drearie ;
And how the sheep roll'd efter that is not told,
An' the way they drank whiskey was eerie.

THE DYING CAB-HORSE

A city of mud, muck and drizzle
Is far-famed London town ;
And there one day in the traffic
We saw an old cab-horse come down.
“ His heart’s abroke,” grumbled the cabman ;
“ He’s finish’d—tha’s why he fell down.”

They tried to persuade him by kicking
To rise if he could to his feet ;
When there in the grip of his agony
The old horse spoke in the street.
You laugh at me—you don’t believe me—
But I say he spoke in the street !

“ You call yourselves men,” said he, dying,
“ And talk of misery, pain ;
But who on earth is there to blame for it
But only yourselves in the main ?
While we, your poor servants and drudges,
Are powerless to act or complain.

You may think I am thirty and agèd,
I tell you I’m barely ten.
I believe I was happy once long ago
When I was a foal in the pen
And romp’d in the field with my mother—
I thought the world beautiful then.

They train’d me for racing. I gloried
In feeling my muscles swell,
And in the great moment I bore myself
Most bravely, they said, and well ;
But just at the moment of victory
I strain’d a back sinew and fell.

Ah ! this you will know was unfortunate
Since it made me eternally lame,
So they brought me to London and sold me
As a cab-horse, much to my shame.
And now you may see, when I'm dying,
My profession is still the same.

With the toil of incessantly trotting,
With the labour of night and of day,
With the sleet and the snow and the north wind,
And the miry slip-slip of the clay,
With the blistering rasp of the harness,
Do you think that our life is so gay ?

At our mashy and mouldy fodder
When hunger gives us no choice ;
At the cold and the dark of the stable,
Do you think we have cause to rejoice ?
At the greed of a stingy master ?
At the curse of a drunken voice ?

Oh ! when we are miserably waiting
And drench'd in the rain or the snow,
And our limbs are aching for weariness,
And our heads are drooping low ;
Then we think of the bright summer meadows
And the beautiful times long ago.

If you would but let us go caper
In the fields and the flowers and all that
Ere we die—we broken-down horses—
We would thank you sincerely for that.
And then when you kill us for cats' meat
You would find us a little more fat !

You see, we've no Heaven to go to,
And little on earth that is sweet.
But here, I am dying—so good-bye ;
I must not encumber the street.
Ah ! master, I have served you long truly ;
Pray, pray do not sell me for meat.”

His ribby old carcase quiver'd ;
His nether lip trembled with pain ;
The film of his dreadful death-agony
Came over his eyes amain—
The film and the dew of death-agony
Came over them there in the rain.

You laugh at me, you'll not believe me.
Ha ! no, I will *not* give it out
That I saw his spirit ascending
Or equine angels about ;
But this I will hold to—he spoke to me—
To me only of course—without doubt.

THE ASCENT OF PARNASSUS.

Thalia Commands the Poet to Write a Satire.

So—shade the lamp and let its light
To learning's golden feast invite.
But stay!—who comes to break the calm?

Satiric Muse!—Good gracious, Ma'am,
Your apparition gave a qualm!

But enter and be seated, pray.
What can I do for you to-day?

The Poet pleads his Incompetence.

What do I hear—rather divine?
(I have forgot my Greek long syne.)
That I should—Goddess, prithee no!
(Plague on't, how does the Attic go?)
Great Goddess, pray—you do forget.
(I've come all over in a sweat.)
Pray reconsider your decision!
I've not the words, the wit, nor vision.
The task you set is much too high
For one so well content as I.
I have no grievance that I know—
Except perhaps—well, so and so.
I live at rest—one can't, we ken,
Write satire with a gilded pen.
Altho', great Muse, you may inspire,
In faith, I've not the natural ire—
Much less the rhymes that you require.
Long now I've left the tuneful line
To worship at Athene's shrine.
Ten better bards you'll find before
The nearest publisher's back-door.

Great Madam, hear me when I pray—
 Your mandate fills me with dismay.
 Why, what the deuce have I to say,
 That's not been said a thousand times
 To lutes or tomtoms, yells or rhymes ?
 The poets spoil the broth, if any,
 Like cooks, by being much too many.
 The ancients, having ate the pudding,
 Left but the empty dish it stood in—
 A world we cannot if we would in
 Be new or great, but only good in.
 (This couplet, tho' it gives my sense,
 Proves also my incompetence.)
 How then can such a wretch o'ertake
 Your flying fancies fine, and make
 The trembling tendrons of your lyre,
 Resolved in music, flame to fire ?

New Difficulties in Ascending Parnassus.

You say I've but to tell the truth,
 And for my faults you'll give me ruth.
 Madam, of old Parnassus stood
 Full free to all who would and could.
 The bard determined to aspire
 Had but to climb and twang his lyre.
 (Though if, of course, he proved a clown,
 Jove and Apollo drove him down.)
 But now two dreadful new-born Gods
 Bar access to those blest abodes,
 Waylay like bandits, or devour
 The hapless wight who tries to soar—
 As pike each waterfall and dam on
 Await the poor ascending salmon.
 The first of these was born, I wis,
 Of Hermes and of Nemesis,

And like his mother guerdon gives,
But like his father sometimes thieves.
With haughty mien he takes his seat
Where spring aloft Parnassus' feet,
And seizing the poetic soul
Exacts preliminary toll—
And more. To him who pleasing sings
Jove sometimes half a drachma flings :
This to the bard the other hands,
And for the service half demands—
God Publisher, in our barb'rous speech,
Hight—may I keep me from his reach !

But most of all the gods I fear
The new Olympian, Critic-Seer.
By Jove appointed to advise
Within the circle of the Wise.
(Where every week the Thund'rer sits
To give the Poets fame or fits,
As each, the Publisher safe pass'd,
Ascends Parnassus' top at last.)
He stands beside the dreadful Throne
And views th' aspirants each alone,
Thro' astigmatic glasses that
Transform him ugly, thin or fat,
Just how you wear them, till a man
Forgets even how to scan ;
Then sends each panting poet down
To lower Hades, one by one.
He keeps a rod to make us rue it,
Whether we did or did not do it ;
And writes us in a scarlet scroll
Impostor, thief, or knave, or fool.
For this he has a single rule—

Be new or nothing. Thus we're caught—
We can't be new so must be naught.
But Jove (now still more portly grown)
Remains attentive to his frown,
And hurls us into night, perdy.

The God you doubtless know, Lady.
Of glad Persephone, new-chill'd,
When, with her virgin fingers fill'd,
With those fresh flowers found by her,
Black Pluto pluckt her to his lair.
He was conceived—a blighted birth
Untimely born of Hell and Earth,
Who ever on his forehead wore
The wither'd buds his mother bore,
And in his hand his father's chain ;
And so climb'd up to heaven amain.
At sight of him the Muses shriekt ;
Heav'n's harmonies ceasing, groaning, creakt ;
Apollo, wrathful, rent his lyre
And gave to him the broken wire ;
With which delighted, to atone
He made another of his own.
Now, judging all by his own rule,
He kills the arts with ridicule.
Whose harps will not accord with his
He hurls down to his father Dis ;
And even Jove, consumed with fear,
Suspends the laugh and checks the tear.
Now all the heav'ns and earth have changed ;
Elsewhere the Gods and fairies ranged.
No more in deep-dell'd woods at noon
Pan pipes unseen his sudden tune,
That shadow-dappled Naiads near
Shrink in their startled pools to hear.

No longer Eos leads the morn
 And Dian dims her fires for scorn ;
 Nor in the mystic midnight warm,
 When silvery Cynthia veils her form,
 The Maenads dance before the storm.
 The wolves on waste Parnassus howl ;
 Athene's gone (but left her owl) ;
 Your Sisters wander'd none knows where ;
 And Aphrodite dyes her hair.
 Sad Hermes flies where'er he can ;
 Apollo seeks the Isle of Man ;
 And Dionysus soaks in beer
 With moody Ares all the year.
 Such sorrows smote the world entire
 When Critic tuned Apollo's lyre.

The Poet Narrates his Sad History.

Not even, Madam, your disdain
 Will force me face those gods again.
 On hearing my sad story you will
 Confess I've cause to fear the duel.
 When I was young and tho't to scale
 Parnassus on a pint of ale,
 I made my rhymes on pretty things—
 Stars, flowers and streams, and Psyche's wings—
 With which I proudly hoped to stir
 The stony heart of Publisher.
 Ah, well ! you know how poets fare.
 Before him edged on office chair
 We wait to hear his lips declare
 Doom dark and dreadful on our work.
 The hair is horrent ; members jerk ;
 The gout of ghastly anguish pour
 Along the fingers to the floor ;

We feebly con but cannot blurt
 A deprecation to avert.
 At last we feel the thund'rous thud ;
 Then tott'ring take the script and plod
 To seek a less damnific god.
 Outcast, we take th' accursed roll
 And hurl it circling from the soul.
 The bridge of life doth blackly show—
 And blackly Lethe swirls below.
 But youth resilient urged me still
 Once more t' attempt the Heavenly Hill,
 And eke to do it in a way
 So fine the Gods would bid me stay
 To supper. So I humble took
 Earth, Heaven, and Hell to make my book ;
 All forms and potencies that stand
 Within the soul and give command ;
 Love, Hate, Good, Evil interchanged
 In constant contrast aptly ranged—
 The various substance of the soul,
 Like colour'd clays in potter's bowl—
 And wro't them in one mighty whole.

How he Ascended Parnassus.

A great conception, you are saying ;
 But scarcely one that will be paying.
 Well, I confess it was not ill ;
 (If th' author cannot praise, who will ?)
 In short, with it (and cash) I pass'd
 The doubting Publisher at last ;
 Essay'd ascent, and won the steeps
 Where Jove his weekly Council keeps,
 No more of Gods, alas ! composed
 But minor deities (who dozed)—

Some local Fauns and Gods of Waters,
 Thersites' ghost, Silenus, Satyrs ;
 In fact, all Critics' friends in tatters,
 Less like divinities than ratters.
 They'd just dismissed of bards a score—
 Jove's Eagle yawn'd to see one more.
 Scarce to the windless height I'd clomb
 When glass-eyed Critic struck me dumb.
 Clad in an academic gown,
 His look already sent me down.
 He took the drama, scratch'd his ear,
 And read the title loud and clear ;
 Declared my style compounded was
 Of Plato, Marlowe, Kant and Boz ;
 That all my lofty, tragic woe
 Was stolen straight from so-and-so.
 The world, he said, had had enough
 Of all this imitation stuff.
 The good in it was scarcely new,
 The new in it was bad. The churl
 Persuaded Jove to seize and hurl ;
 Who then (his Syndicate in rags
 Were eating pies from paper bags)
 Firm grip'd me by the (wingless) heel
 And flung. I, circling wheel on wheel
 Past presences of startled air,
 Fall ignominious who knows where.
 Behind my sheets of verses fare,
 Each circling like their author there.

How he Fell into the Bog of Science.

Nine days I sang my apologue
 In mid-air ; till, like a dead dog,
 Plump in a deep and dismal bog
 I fell. Tho' black yet soft the ooze,

I felt it warmer than the Muse.
That dolorous quagmire, Madam, lies
Far from the empire of your eyes ;
Where those who toil to reach the brink
The more they labour more they sink.
Emerged, I found me in an isle
Upon whose shores no sunbeams smile ;
Around, the deep of destiny
In endless calm calls moaningly ;
And dim the red sun sinks to sea.
Athene's isle—a wondrous land
Where few have stood or care to stand ;
For there the Goddess sends her slaves
To dig the magic gold she craves
With which to crown aspiring man
Lord of a world elysian.
Above what nature does or can ;
With that cold product of the sod
To make him in the end a god.
But in that dark and dismal isle
The toil and mire alike defile.
Tho' great the Goddess, dull the slaves—
One thought exalts and yet depraves.
This mission theirs—to find the stuff ;
And all's not much, nor much enough.
With talon'd hands and shaggy hair
Each struggles in his burrow there ;
His head is buried subterrene ;
Only his jerking heels are seen.
If haply fortune one consoles
The rest run shrieking from their holes,
Snatch at the prize and fighting round it
Declare each one 'twas he who found it ;
And yet indeed it matters not,
For great Athene takes the lot.

For failure that hard Dame awards
 No pity—for success, rewards ;
 Yet every grain of gold they find
 Is endless wealth to human kind.

There I, unworthy, worked beside ;
 Long years the racking task I plied ;
 At last a mighty nugget spied.
 Straight round me run the threat'ning crew ;
 Smite, bite, and scratch, and slander too ;
 Take my bright gold and then acclaim
 'Twas I who stole it all from them.
 My own compatriots lead the brawl ;
 My nearest friends are worst of all ;
 Those unto whom I gen'rous gave
 Snatcht at the rest and call'd me knave,
 And left me naked. I'd be dead
 If pitying strangers had not fed.
 The time is past ; the laugh is mine ;
 My loss no longer I repine ;
 I have my humble fig and vine.

Athene's Garden.

What then, Great Goddess, should arouse
 Me from my humble toil'd repose
 To scale once more Parnassian snows ?
 For you the lyre, the song, the talk ;
 For me Athene's gravel walk.
 In ever unapproachèd height
 Parnassus springs before the sight.
 But Her dim shadows still invite.
 I see his twin-born peaks arise
 And sparkle silver to the skies—
 Enough to climb them with the eyes.

In pale Athene's service I
Have less to win, but less to try ;
No heights allure, no depths appal ;
Tho' less the triumph, less the fall.
Here in Her deep and dusky dell
The silent cypress groweth well.
Along the lawns of level grass
The tinkling streamlets pause and pass
Pierian, nor thy Hippocrene
More bubbling-beauteous to the scene.
To their low notes the nightingale
Enlayeth her long-linkèd wail
Of tongue-deprivèd Philomel,
What time the lone star looms his light
Upon the purple brows of night,
And fragrant pine-odours embark
Within the deep-endonjon'd dark,
Like memories. In Her high eyes
No passion shakes the still surmise ;
The tho't awakens, the man dies.
Her no revolted rages dare
Disturb ; no threnody of care ;
No self, no sorrow, no despair.
Who is all music knows no psalm ;
Who never dies no tears embalm ;
In tho't, like death, eternal calm.
So She. Yet from Her every deed
Comes something for our joy or need—
And not the less to lift or lead.
We stand at fault. Our follies vex.
A thousand diff'rent calls perplex ;
But in the darkness comes Her voice
And cries for ever, On. Rejoice !
Ah ! let it be. We seek the day.
For Her alone to show the way.

The Muse Replies.

The Goddess rose, and smiling said,
“ Tho’ still rebellious, you are sped.
Athene I, and I the Muse—
One ; and one minister may use,
Tho’ humble. Let the arrows fly,
Or blunt, or barbless, or awry.
But, take this comfort—with your wit
He dies not ever who is hit !
With all your nation’s fault you speak—
In endless mitigation weak.
No matter. When my time is come
I’ll thunder what will make you dumb,
And write a sharper satire then
With something stronger than the pen.
Farewell—and let your wisdom be,
When truth is naked not to see.”

OUR PHILOSOPHERS.

To scorn the lie and love the truth
Is the last lesson for the youth ;
But now we make him by our schooling
A master in the art of fooling.
Why e'en our first philosophers
Lead here, I grant, the universe,
Since smiling Berkley blinkt the eyes
Of all the world by proving lies,
Which everyone within his conscience
Knows to be only subtle nonsense—
Yields to th' insidious subreption,
But also guesses the deception.
('Tis half a truth, I don't deny ;
But half a truth is a whole lie.)
So now our loftier sages reason
That reasoning is out of season,
And when they cannot prove their case
Argue that argument is base,
And in the end, to make us see,
Divine their own divinity.
Thus they can serve us on their dish
Not what is true but what they wish—
Stones for our bread, serpents for fish.
Whate'er their thesis, they achieve it ;
It must be true 'cause they believe it.
To him whose own creative brain
Has made the Cosmos, all is plain,
And, if he wish it, his decrees
Can make the Isn't Is, with ease—
Thus in the end it is not odd
The sage creates himself a god.
There's only one thing causes trouble---
Two sages make the deity double,

And three or more confound the case,
Since each demands the premier place,
And vows the others can't have come
Except from his own cerebrum.
Thus ever since the Bishop's birth
Confusion has befallen earth ;
We don't know who imagines us—
He or some other genius ;
But only dare to raise the question,
He may perhaps have indigestion ;
And if we could would use the fist
On that dyspeptic solipsist.
Yet I admit the smaller fry
To prove their theses sometimes try—
A wasted labour we bewail,
Since they are never known to fail.
One lightens philosophic tedium
By calling Hegel thro' a medium ;
Another, to convince the many,
Reads tho'ts of those who haven't any ;
Or visits ancient gallow-posts
To set a trap for catching ghosts ;
Or in a churchyard gives his lectures
And tries to photograph the spectres.

OUR STAGE.

Or try the art where best we find
A mirror of the people's mind---
And on the stage I will admit
We see some sparkle of your wit,
Tho' oft we doubt which is the fool,
Who teaches or who sits at school.
Still there our Shakespeare's art survives,
But only for our children, wives
And friends we wish to give a seat to—
A benefit but not a treat to.
His verse the actors redispense
By weak'ning rhythm, rhyme and close,
To make it more like sense and prose.
And mar the march of Marlowe's line,
Lest fools complain it is too fine.
For th' audience brings such wisdom wi' them
They feel that no one talks in rhythm,
And therefore would be hurt to know
Great Shakespeare made his men talk so.
For where we really are exacting
Is to have truth—at least in acting.
Well train'd the players, learnèd, quick ;
But ah ! the audience—rather sick ;
With apprehension on their brows
Like cattle in a slaughter house,
They give approval to the poet
Whenever they are told to show it.
But now behold these brows relax
Before a stage of jumping jacks,
Or where the names of Music and
Of Comedy are most profaned.
The hideous drums and brasses bray
The single tune they love to-day.

Which like the single British sauce
Is always sure to bring applause,
Tho' always varied aye the same,
Tho' much disguised yet ever tame.
The pointless tale and punning jest
Rouse ardour in each simple breast,
Till thund'ring joy breaks up and down
The foolish faces of the town ;
Tho' all can see the silly revel
Is made to please the lowest level,
And strangers ask what folly it is
That so delights the simple British.
Nor blame the authors or the actors—
Who writes for fools fears no detractors.
They have to seek the highest wage,
It is our audience damns our stage.

OUR PRONUNCIATION OF GREEK AND LATIN.

See now the little wretched scholars
With inky thumbs and irksome collars.
With fidgeting feet and wand'ring looks
Attempt to con their blotted books,
To learn to read and write a tongue
Which no one ever said or sung ;
Where Sizar raised his haughty head
And " vinai, vaidai, vaisai " said ;
Or eke the ancient Greek to know
According to Oxford-atte-Bowe,
In which, all common sense renounced
Each syllable is mispronounced.
(Forgive, I pray, the Gallic rhyme ;
For better I've no taste nor time.)
Enough to turn Achilles white
Or Ares pound the ground in flight,
They study Virgil, Horace, Homer
Not for their beauty, wisdom, humour.
Wit, art, or heart, but for their grammar.
The thund'ring Iliad is become
A text to teach a rule of thumb,
The mighty march of music dumb.
Achilles lectures on the article,
And Hector teaches the Greek particle ;
But what they did or why they did it
Irks neither those who read, nor edit.

ENGLISH SPELLING.

Or see them write the bitter anguish
Which pedagogues avow is English—
By them in league with hell invented
To prove to all we are demented.
For speech and spelling don't agree—
Like country curates after tea.
We mispronounce our “ e's ” and “ a's ”
And write each sound a dozen ways ;
Altho' we speak a living tongue
Must learn to write a fancied one.
Not ev'n resembling that we chat in,
But spurious Saxon, Greek and Latin ;
Till strangers vow that English is
More idiotic than Chinese.
Altho' we keep a thousand schools
To teach us sense and all her rules,
'Tis odd that none of them dares go
So far as spell ded donky so.
(Suggesting that, as Weller cries,
The honest creature never dies.)

ENGLAND IN 1912.

In our fair land, where'er the eyes
Can range the open 'scape and skies,
A hundred beauteous mansions rise ;
Whose turrets to the setting Sun
Flash back his beams when day is done.
Whose oaken floors can scarce endure
Their lordly load of furniture ;
Whose swarded lawns and gardens trim
Are laid to flatter every whim.
“ Here dwell,” the Stranger cries, elate,
“ The men who made this Britain great,
In Science, Wisdom, Art and State.
This house is doubtless that of one
Who hath some superservice done.
And that, and that—say, theirs who find
Great benefits for all mankind,
With toil infinite, endless pain,
The racking labour of the brain ;
The knowledge that our age endows :
The wisdom vested in our brows ;
Who teach us how to weigh the star
Or harness nature to the car,
To handle lightning, hold the fire,
To tame the tempest's feeble ire,
To drive the skulking sickness hence
And curb the murd'rous pestilence.
There dwell the men who mould our tho't
In beauteous phrases justly wro't ;
Who give experience without pain
In tales to teach or entertain ;
Who make the music that's divine
To strengthen, gladden and refine ;

Who feast the eyes and lift the heart
With labour'd gems of perfect art.
Who give us all that makes us great
Above the prime barbaric state.
No wonder Britain rules us when
She honours thus her greatest men.”
“ Oh, no,” the local swain replies,
“ There lives a man who makes pork-pies ;
In that there house, so folk aver,
A noble Jewish usurer ;
In yonder one a mighty peer.
Who brews from chemicals our beer ;
A politician, lawyer, quack
Lives there, and there ; and further back
A smart municipal contractor,
A welcher, and a comic actor.”
So goes the tale ; and such the gods
Who dwell in Britain's blest abodes.
And where are they who bless ? Unknown
Each toils in silence and alone ;
His highest glory, to have none ;
His widest fame, to be unknown ;
His greatest riches, to be poor ;
His keenest pleasure, to endure.
For mark the law that underlies—
By work alone one cannot rise ;
He wins no wealth who merely toils ;
The idle schemer takes the spoils.
Who stands upright in Britain falls.
He wins the prize of life who crawls.

OUR MERITS.

Altho' we do no more delight
In mighty theme or lyric height,
We still can show our taste survives
By cursing split infinitives,
Or saying of each modern classic
It is enough to make an ass sick.
Altho' we hate the name of Science,
Think how we talk about Clairvoyance,
And prove our insight by our boasts
That we believe in ghouls and ghosts.
Altho' we keep our Great unfed,
Think how we praise them when they're dead !
And then, to prove our kind intentions,
E'en give their children civil pensions.
Our heroes' widows need not fear—
They may get fifty pounds a year ;
And thronging tourists love to carve
Their names where poets used to starve.
There are some foreigners so base
They say we are a stuck-up race ;
Declare our manners are not good ;
Our hearts are marble, brains are wood.
But what a monstrous accusation !
There never lived a kinder nation !
Think how we hate to hear of wrong—oh !
In Russia, Tripoli or Congo.
As for our manners, tho' not courtly—
We're apt to answer somewhat shortly,
And do not like to bow or scrape
Like any foreigner or ape.
Yet there's no Briton, saint or sinner,
Who does not like to dress for dinner.

But whatsoe'er our foes may say
About our hapless men to-day,
No censure sure will ever vex
Our gentle fellows of your sex.
Not they who idle, eat and prowl
With Bacchus and Tobacchus foul ;
But strong and cleanly, pure and good,
They, they at least, do what they should
In all the toils of motherhood.
And last ! In one thing we excel
All people that on earth do dwell.
We have our follies ; but, before all,
We honour virtue. We are moral.

Review by the late Mr. Dixon Scott, which appeared in "The Liverpool Courier," 11th February, 1907.

FABULOUS FANCIES.

By these delicate excursions and experiments in the fields of fabulous verse, Wisdom is once more justified of her children ; and to the delight that all clean-cut artistry has the power to offer they add, for some of us, the pleasure of the unexpected. Judged purely as a piece of verse-craft, the book is packed with admirable qualities : it is distinguished, it is deft, it is always rich, it is often beautiful, and the veins of its orthodox figures are filled with colours, so fine that they become wholly vital and romantic ; judged again, as a collection of fables, of semi-satirical apologues, it is again distinguished—this time for its clean-cut, cameo qualities, its wholesomeness of outlook, its witty morals, its wise persiflage ; and amongst all these virtues, the solitary defect to be observed is the inevitability of that division into two distinct halves.

One's admiration for the word runs parallel to one's admiration for the idea ; but the two are scarcely ever coincident. Even in this, one of the most perfect, the effect is dual, there is a certain lack of unanimity :

(" The Toad and the Fays," page 6)

That is wholly delightful ; but, none the less, its conception and its execution have been divorced, and whilst the lines

The Stars rise up and fall, the Stars
Do shine in pools and stilly places,

constitute by far the finest touch in the thing when viewed as verse, the effect they produce is one that hinders, rather than helps, the fundamental *motif*.

But even this defect—which is only revealed because the worth of the book is so great as to demand the application of the very sternest standards—even this defect is not without its qualities ; and in the

last few pieces, where the idea is less purely intellectual, the tissue whose very stateliness interrupted the brisk movements of the morals becomes entirely appropriate :

Nor in those regions of windless cold
Is fiery the Sun, tho' fierce in light,
But frozen-pale, the numbed Moon
Wanders along the ridges that fold
Enormous Peaks, what time the Night
Rivals with all her Stars the Noon.

That, from Alastor, has the high, authentic tone ; and this, the concluding line, if it be not derivative, is nothing less than living Poetry :

Th' Immortals smote him to a Stone
That aches for ever on the Peak.

These verses were written, we observe, " between the years 1880 and 1890." It is impossible that they should have lacked successors, and we beg their creator to grant us a sequel to this finely produced and delicately printed volume.

D. S.

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